

Motivations for starting combat sports training as seen by boxing and MMA contestants

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1. Introduction

Martial arts with many centuries-long traditions are perceived in public opinion as a carrier of many desirable values that is used in youth education system in the Far-East societies. They were used not only to bring health benefits, but also for moral education, reduction of social brutality and promoting positive models of behaviour, as well as a source of complacency (Kuśnierz, 2006; Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2010; Twemlow, et al., 2008). Their ideological assumptions involve a view that people train inspired by warrior cultural traditions, thus seeking psychophysical improvement and self-fulfilment through combat techniques (Theeboom, Dong Zhu, & Vertonghen, 2012). Herrigel (1989) in his description of benefits of such exercises lists: ability to prevent aggression, to control own emotions and to react calmly in an emergency situation. Combat sports, thanks to multiple values related to them, have been introduced as a part of school Physical Education curricula. This specific form of motor activity was recognized as a very beneficial one – in the opinion of researchers from the European Physical Education Association (Theeboom, DeKnop, Wylleman, 2008). A motivation is a necessary factor for undertaking and continuing sport training and it also affects greatly a chance to succeed. People are often drawn to specific sports thinking of a given discipline as particularly interesting and fulfilling or they have been encouraged to one by friends or family. Another motivating factor may be treating sports as a road to self-improvement, improving physical fitness or health (Karageorghis & Terry, 2011).

The aim of this paper is to study motivation for starting combat sport training among boxing and MMA contestants.

2. Methodology

The study involved 23 MMA contestants and 26 boxing contestants representing sport clubs of Opole. Average age for MMA contestants was 24.3 years with 7-8 years of training. For boxers, average age was 26.6 with 6-7 years of training. A diagnostic survey method with questionnaire technique involving Pelletier et al. (1995) motivation questionnaire was applied. The analysis included calculation of arithmetical averages and t-Test. A level of significance of $p < 0.05$ was settled.

3. Results

The obtained results lead to conclusion that for the boxers' group, the most important motivating factors are: satisfaction from learning difficult training techniques, excitement experienced by people training hand-to-hand combat and emotions felt during practise of a favourite sport. For MMA contestants, enjoyment resulting from participation in trainings is the main motivating factor, then enjoyment from learning new combat techniques, and practising sport as a source of well-

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being. The statistical analysis showed that motivations of MMA and boxing contestants are not significantly different. However, it was found that there is statistical difference between internal and external motivation. Both, MMA and boxing contestants showed much higher level of internal motivation.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Studies on motivation for starting combat sports or martial arts training show large variation of motivating factors. Usually it is a desire to learn hand-to-hand combat, self-defence, and, for martial arts, a desire to follow the great masters (Kuśnierz, 2011). Other indicated motivations are a desire to improve physical fitness or health and self-improvement (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2010). Studies by Cynarski and Litwiniuk (2006) also show that knowledge is an essential determinant of attitude towards combat sports and martial arts. It is worth noting that the studied group of athletes showed predominance of internal motivation, which indicates good level of knowledge and awareness among the respondents. This means that main motivations for starting trainings of these combat sports are based on natural subjective inclination to education and self-development. The respondents undertake and perform activities in line with their interests, which gives them satisfaction and a sense of competence.

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